

## Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 127626 TOSEC 020231

EXDIS

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE, JUNE 2, FROM BANGKOK RPTD TO  
YOU:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 10006

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM HABIB

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SN

SUBJ: VISIT TO SINGAPORE

1. PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW LAID OUT THE RED CARPET  
DURING MY VISIT TO SINGAPORE, DEMONSTRATING BEYOND A DOUBT  
HIS DESIRE TO ENCOURAGE CONTINUED US PARTICIPATION IN THE  
SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SEA. IN TWO SEPARATE CONVER-  
SATIONS WITH LEE, AND ANOTHER WITH FOREIGN MINISTER  
RAJARATNAM, DISCUSSION FOCUSSED ON THAILAND, MALAYSIA,  
ASEAN, AND THE US ROLE. THEY ALSO DREW ATTENTION TO  
RECENT STATEMENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES ABOUT US BASES AND THE  
POSSIBILITY OF CHANGES IN PHILIPPINE POLICIES. IN A  
CONTINUATION OF THE VIEWS HE EXPRESSED IN WASHINGTON EARLIER  
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THIS MONTH, LEE SPOKE BLUNTLY OF HIS ASSESSMENT THAT HANOI  
WILL APPLY PRESSURE ON THE THAI, THAT THE THAI ARE FLOUNDERING  
AND THE PRESENT RTG IS UNLIKELY TO SURVIVE THE YEAR, THAT  
MALAYSIA NEEDS BLOSTERING AND ACCESS TO CERTIAN TYPES OF

AMERICAN ASSISTANCE, AND THAT ASEAN CAN BE A KEY MECHANISM FOR DEVELOPING REGIONAL CONFIDENCE AND COOPERATION.

2. I RECEIVED THE IMPRESSION THAT SINGAPORE HAS LITTLE CONFIDENCE IN THE THAI ABILITY TO RESIST HANOI. FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI WAS EXTREMELY JITTERY DURING THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN MID-MAY AND LEE CONSIDERS THE PRESENT THAI GOVERNMENT TO BE WEAK AND INEFFECTIVE. IN LEE'S JUDGMENT, THERE IS LITTLE ANYONE CAN DO FOR THE THAI AT THIS STAGE, OTHER THAN PROVIDE "A LITTLE ASPIRIN" AND BE PATIENT. I WOULD GUESS THAT LEE AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE COUNTING ON THE THAI MILITARY TO REASSERT POLITICAL DOMINANCE EVENTUALLY, THEREBY OFFERING THAILAND AT LEAST A CHANCE TO CONTEND SUCCESSFULLY WITH THE THREAT THAT CONFRONTS THEM.

3. LEE DEVOTED THE MAJORITY OF HIS ATTENTION IN OUR DISCUSSIONS TO MALAYSIA. HE FORESEES PROGRESSIVE EXPANSION OF THE COMMUNIST TERRORIST MOVEMENT IN MALAYSIA. HE IS CONCERNED THAT MALAYSIAN LEADERSHIP, PARTICULARLY THOSE AROUND PRIME MINISTER RAZAK, ARE TOO RELAXED ABOUT THE SITUATION, ALTHOUGH HE GIVES RAZAK HIGH MARKS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT. HE TOLD ME THAT DURING HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER CHAZALI SHAFIE'S MAY 28 VISIT TO SINGAPORE, GHAZALI STATED THE THAI PROBLEM COULD BE HANDLED IF THE THAI WOULD SIMPLY ABANDON THE UNPRODUCTIVE NORTHEAST, AND DEVOTE THAI ENERGIES TO THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY. LEE FOUND SUCH AN ANALYSIS TOTALLY NAIVE. LEE ASSESSES THAT A NEW GENERATION OF MORE MILITANT COMMUNIST TERRORISTS IS EMERGING IN MALAYSIA, AND ALTHOUGH THE MALAYSIAN COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IS SPLIT INTO AT LEAST TWO - AND POSSIBLY THREE - FACTIONS, HE FORESEES PRC SUPPORT IN THE END FOR WHICHEVER FACTION PROVES MOST EFFECTIVE. THE TERRORIST ACTIVITY AT THIS POINT MAY BE SOMETHING OF AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE PRC, BUT THE PRC'S OWN ACTION OF ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH MALAYSIA IN ITSELF SERVED TO CUT THE UMBILICAL CORD BETWEEN PEKING AND THE MALAYSIAN COMMUNISTS. HE SUSPECTS THE LATTER MAY WELL TURN

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TO HAOI FOR SUPPORT IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

4. UNDERLYING MUCH OF LEE'S CONCERN, AS EXPRESSED ALSO BY RAJARATNAM, IS WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS THE GROWING ALIENATION OF THE NON-MALAY POPULATION IN MALAYSIA. THIS IS OF COURSE AN OLD THEME FOR LEE AND OTHER SINGAPOREANS, BUT IN THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES THEY SUGGEST THE SITUATION IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN IN YEARS PAST. LEE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT PRIME MINISTER RAZAK'S HEALTH, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO PARTICULAR REASON TO BELIEVE RAZAK IS CURRENTLY SUFFERING FROM ANY MAJOR MALADY.

5. AS FOR THE US ROLE VIS-A-VIS MALAYSIA, LEE REPEATED

WHAT HE HAD SAID IN WASHINGTON, I.E., THAT THE MALAYSIANS WOULD BENEFIT SIGNIFICANTLY FROM CAREFULLY CHOSEN TYPES OF US ASSISTANCE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR COUNTER-INSURGENCY EFFORT. HE WAS EXPLICIT IN URGING THAT WE MOVE QUICKLY TO STIFFEN THE MALAYSIANS, SUGGESTING THAT THE US SHOULD DO SOME OF THE SMALL THINGS FOR MALAYSIA SUCH AS MAKING M-16'S AVAILABLE WITHOUT DELAY. HE APPRECIATED THAT THE US COULD NOT PROVIDE GRANT AID TO THE GOM, AND SAID HE HAD POINTED THIS OUT IN HIS TALKS WITH MALAYSIAN LEADERS.

6. TURNING TO THE PHILIPPINES, LEE THOUGHT THAT THE GOP WOULD WANT TO PRESS FOR A NATO-TYPE COMMITMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES IN PLACE OF THE EXISTING MUTUAL SECURITY TREATY, BUT AT THE MINIMUM WOULD WANT MORE MONEY FOR LESS REAL ESTATE. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THE PHILIPPINES WANTS ANY FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THEIR SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US. WE SHOULD NOT HAVE TROUBLE IN RETAINING A BASE STRUCTURE OF SOME NATURE BUT CHANGES IN TERMS CAN BE EXPECTED. MEANWHILE, THE GOP WILL POSTURE IN PREPARATION FOR OUR NEGOTIATIONS, AND TO REDUCE THE "US STOOGES" IMAGE THEY HAVE ACQUIRED OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS.

7. LEE AND HIS MINISTERS ARE ANXIOUS TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO STRENGTHEN THE ASEAN MECHANISM. WHILE IN THE PAST NOT ALWAYS THE KEENEST PROPONENTS OF ASEAN, THEY ARE ATTRACTED BY THE POSSIBILITY THAT ASEAN CAN PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN THE SECURITY OF THE REGION. SINGAPORE CONCURS IN THE K.L. FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE DECISION  
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TO APPROACH HANOI ON THE BASIS OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE, RATHER THAN CONFRONTATION OR HOSTILE CO-EXISTENCE, BUT SINGAPORE IS EMPHATIC THAT ASEAN POLICY MUST BE DEVELOPED ON THE BASIS OF STRENGTH. THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNAL STRENGTH IS ESSENTIAL, BUT COOPERATION TO RE-ESTABLISH AN ATMOSPHERE OF COMPOSURE SHOULD BE DEVELOPED WITH A SENSE OF URGENCY. HOPEFULLY, HANOI WILL BE PRE-OCCUPIED OVER THE NEXT YEAR OR TWO WITH RECONSTRUCTION OF VIETNAM. THE GOS HAS URGED ITS ASEAN COLLEAGUES TO MOVE WITH DELIBERATION IN ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PRG. LEE APPEARS UNDER NO ILLUSION AS TO WHO WILL CONTROL SOUTH VIETNAM. THE SINGAPOREANS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ASEAN MOVING AHEAD WITH INTELLIGENCE AND DEFENSE COMMITTEES WHICH CAN DEVELOP THE GROUNDWORK FOR SECURITY RELATIONSHIPS.

8. IN SHORT LEE WANTS THE UNITED STATES TO STAY AROUND IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, IN THAILAND. HE BELIEVES WE MUST DEVOTE SOME EFFORT TO THE MALAYSIANS TO CALM DOWN WHAT HE FORESEES AS AN INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS SITUATION THERE. HE APPRECIATES, AS HE ALWAYS HAS, THAT TROUBLE IN MALAYSIA WILL HAVE ITS ALMOST IMMEDIATE SPINOFF

FOR SINGAPORE. WHITEHOUSE UNQUOTE. INGERSOLL

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